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by

E. P. White

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to Messrs. Bradbury Agnew, Ltd., for
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E.P.W.

PREFACE

INDIA is at the moment very much in the world's eye, and is likely to remain there until the round of Round Tables and the chain of Conferences comes to an end. Therefore the well-informed citizen, who wishes to vote intelligently in favour of the party he habitually votes for, should familiarize himself with Indian conditions by studying Vol. I of the *Simon Report*, the *Year Book of India*, and a few dozen *Provincial Gazeteers*. From these he will derive an extensive, if confused, view of the Indian prospect and of the problems to be solved. But this study must be supplemented by the perusal of a work such as the present, which presents the actual scenes of daily life in one corner of India and, by exhibiting a part, explains the whole. Intensive culture, even of vegetables, produces the largest crops.

August, 1933

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INTRODUCTORY AND MUSICAL

THERE is a certain Indian State called Arampur. That is not its real name, but for reasons which will appear I am not seeking undue publicity. The Free and Independent State of Arampur—I quote from official documents—is governed by a free and independent Raja, with the assistance of a Political Resident appointed by the Government of India. The Raja, who is entitled to a salute of n guns, functions by means of a Dewan (or vizier) and a Durbar (or assembly of notables).

There has been much talk lately of Home Rule in India. Well, Home Rule is no novelty to us of Arampur State. We always live under Home Rule, tempered by the presence of the Political Resident, so that Home Rule in practice may be studied here at first-hand in all its various manifestations.

Now you know all you need, and no number of questions asked in Parliament or by letter will extract any further information on the subject. If you were to visit Arampur, you might actually find the Raja, the Political Resident, the Dewan and the Durbar. At any rate you would find their offices, but as the Head Clerks of these offices are pretty capable fellows you would make little progress in your inquiries.

The Raja might possibly be on the Riviera, the P.R.

on a shikar expedition to distant parts, the Dewan in Bombay, and the Durbar scattered to their country houses. If you wanted to meet personally anybody in authority you would be led eventually—if I could not stop you—to me. I am holding down the job of Assistant Political Resident.

My business is to temporize until the P.R. returns. If anybody wants a new road or a new picture-palace, I become very sceptical as to the necessity of such; I point out how many roads and cinemas have been built lately and generally sneeze at the whole project. This is usually effective. If the proposal recur, I am dubious about the constitutional aspect of the affair and request references to the Durbar and the Dewan. That settles it.

All this time, while I am left in charge, I jolly well earn my pay, drafting letters in which I have ‘grave doubts’ ‘have yet to learn’, ‘am not aware’, ‘have the honour to inquire on what authority’ and ‘venture to dissent’. I can tell you I am worn out by the time the P.R. returns to take up the reins.

I work just as hard when the P.R. is here, but it is work of a different kind. I have to ensure that there is a four for bridge whenever the P.R. wants to play; I organize discomfort for commercial persons visiting the State, to induce them to depart before they can obtain orders; I must also attend to my duties as Adjutant to the State Cavalry, which is maintained out of State funds.

INTRODUCTORY AND MUSICAL

This curious force contains only one human member, myself. The rest of the strength are ponies and grooms. Strangely enough, the ponies are all under 14.1 hands, and trained to polo. The Adjutant is naturally unable to exercise the lot, so that the Resident, the Civil Surgeon, the Police Commissioner and certain Indian gentlemen have to be called in to exercise them on the polo ground daily at 4.30 P.M.

When we are visited by a High Official, the State cavalry are sent to manœuvre in some distant part of the country. This is advisable, because High Officials do not as a rule care for polo. High Officials and Eminent Personages usually want to shoot big game. You will hear more of this later. It is sufficient for the present to say that if we show them good sport we are certain to learn later that His Excellency is pleased to note the healthy condition of the State Government and finances, and we know that we shall not be turned out of this paradise for some time yet.

I spend a lot of time too over the State Band. When I came to Arampur, the prevailing idea of a band's function was to play continuously for several hours at Indian weddings. Musical performances were mere tests of endurance, and certainly in their own line the State Band was unbeatable. I have known the players make the whole night hideous without interval from 9 P.M. to 7 A.M.

I wondered at first how this was done, and discovered,

after an intensive study which nearly shattered my ear-drums, that whenever the bandsmen threatened to become entirely breathless, the bandmaster—who had lost little tissue over conducting, this being a go-as-you-please performance—would bid them desist from their efforts for a while. Then he alone, by the aid of mouth, hand and foot, saw to it that there was no diminution in volume of sound. Once rested, the main body would begin again, and thus continuity was maintained.

I found I had little taste for this exotic music and I persuaded the bandmaster to make experiments. He knew, he told me, the Western notation, which was similar to the Afghan, and could read the scores. So I got him a few simple tunes from Bombay, pointing out that these would be most welcome to the Europeans in the station and earn him great rewards. He set to work, and after some weeks invited me to a rehearsal.

He stood up and waved his baton in the approved Western style. His team followed him gamely, gazing at him with eyes of fierce concentration in the intervals of glaring at their scores, and blowing all the time like steam-bellows. By-and-by the din ceased and I knew that the tune was ended.

“Very good,” I observed, “very good indeed, though you need to practise a little more yet. ‘The Blue Bells of Scotland’ should really ring a little clearer than that.”

“Excuse me, your Honour,” he replied, “that was ‘God Save the King’.”

INTRODUCTORY AND MUSICAL

I praised his loyalty and escaped with difficulty from my unfortunate position by promising that he should be allowed to play this new addition to his repertory at the conclusion of the P.R.'s next garden-party. This actually occurred; and, as I had arranged to receive from the bandmaster a secret sign at the moment when the Anthem was about to begin, I was able to pass the word among the guests, who took up the appropriate attitude with becoming solemnity.

Fired with this success, I led the band to higher flights. We had long needed dance-music provided by something more vital than a gramophone; so my next purchase from State funds was a parcel of scores of jazz masterpieces. Of this experiment I will in modesty say little. I merely point to the fact that we do dance to alleged dance-music provided by this very band.

I lately congratulated the bandmaster on his splendid achievement, saying something about East meeting West, though I should have said East-meeting West Africa.

"It is nothing, your Honour," he replied, "though we take more rest, it is just the same as wedding-music."

I allowed this frank admission to pass without remark. In the East silence is more than golden, so I forebore to tell him that during the evening I had noticed that several of the bandsmen's scores were being played upside down.

THE RAJA AND SOME OTHERS

THE Raja is a jolly old chap and deserves a paragraph or so to himself.

To begin with, he is of the school which prefers passive amusements to active. He motors where he can, batting at top speed along the only reasonably good road in the State, connecting the railway-station and the capital. When he is lifted from the train or car, he is dropped into a litter. He contrives never to walk more than five yards at a stretch. When on flat ground he is wheeled about in an invalid chair. You can easily see that he has solved the problem of passivity very thoroughly.

On occasion his chair is wheeled into the middle of the maidan. This means that the Raja is going to take riding exercise. This he does vicariously. While he sits mounted men ride round him in small circles at speed and the Raja, by sheer power of mind-transference, enjoys all the sensations of a stiff gallop and even breaks into a profuse sweat. He is then wheeled home for a bath. Exercise and bath over, he is ready to devote himself to real pleasure.

He sends for his collection of clockwork toys. The courtiers wind them up in turn and send them careering across the marble floor. Then perhaps he will have his

THE RAJA AND SOME OTHERS

electric train started, for the Raja is always up to date. He was the first man in India to instal a wireless-receiver, though at the time he was out of reach of any transmitting station. He got over the difficulty by having a gramophone working on the fifth floor of the Palace and wirelessing the noise to the ground floor where he sat.

Now and then the Raja has to ratify a new law or issue a proclamation. On such occasions he has to affix his seal. That is to say, the Dewan comes to the Palace with half a dozen attendants, of whom one bears the Royal Seal in a box. The box is placed before the Raja and a second attendant unlocks it. A third extracts the seal, a fourth inks it and then, in the Raja's presence, the Dewan presses the seal upon the parchment. A fifth attendant cleans off the ink and replaces the seal, a sixth relocks the box. The Dewan and his party take their leave, leaving the Raja exhausted by the sight of all this official activity.

The Raja owes his leisure almost entirely to the Dewan who is always ready to assume new duties on anybody's behalf. The Dewan is a glutton for work. He is always starting new departments and offices attached. Being a kind man by nature and possessed of innumerable relations, he cannot bear to see any of them in want. Hence the State offices are almost entirely staffed with the Dewan's relatives and there are always more waiting for jobs. It is a frequent criticism of the modern Great

State that the Heads are often in ignorance of what goes on in the various offices under their control. No such difficulty occurs in Arampur, for the Dewan is able to obtain private information of all kinds from each subordinate in turn, and thus knows to the last detail what is going on.

When the Dewan goes to Bombay for sea-air and a change, he takes with him all the hostile and disaffected elements, so that in his absence the Departments work even more smoothly than usual. I never get any replies to my letters.

From the Dewan's point of view this may well be called a corporate state. I should like to be present at just one of those family discussions which take place after dinner at the Dewan's. Sitting cross-legged on the floor and chewing betel-nut, the Dewan and his chief officers review the past and arrange the future. The Chief Justice, who is the Dewan's maternal uncle, gives the real reason for some of his recent decisions. The Director of Public Works, first cousin to the Dewan and a versatile young man, gives a spirited imitation of the Political Resident asking for a modern bathroom. The Postmaster-General retails the tit-bits of certain officially opened letters and exhibits the photographs which he has confiscated as being unfit for transmission by post. The Chief Treasury Officer, half-brother of the Dewan, indicates that funds are so low as to preclude any possibility of unofficial advances to any Department. Alto-

THE RAJA AND SOME OTHERS

gether they pass a very pleasant evening. But enough of these lesser folk; let us return to the head of the State, in whom the chief power resides.

Now and then, on the Royal Birthday and similar occasions, the Raja entertains the European officials and their wives. There is plenty of champagne, and some of the food comes on ice all the way from Europe. The Raja's personal contribution to the merriment is to tell a story. He has only one, a very old and very raw story, but when he tells it after dinner—the ladies having been previously removed to a diplomatic distance—the most successful music-hall comedian might envy the applause which follows. Eager to give pleasure to his guests he tells it a second time. He continues to repeat it time after time, the laughter on each occasion being still deafening, although a captious observer might note a slight diminution in sincerity after the seventh *encore*.

However, at last somebody succeeds in diverting the Raja's attention to another subject, and the story is forgotten until the next entertainment of the kind.

The Raja spends some months every year in Europe, to gain some respite from the anxieties of a throne. But even from the Riviera he continually sends letters of exhortation and moral counsel to his officials, assuring them that theirs are positions of responsibility, that life is not all pleasure, that they must never be weary in well-doing, and that they must labour incessantly for the good of his beloved people.

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These missives are dictated by the Raja to his secretary, who is evidently an able and versatile person, if at times careless; as, for instance when he sent the Director of Public Works a sheet beginning 'My darling Mimi' and proceeded to refer to facts of which the Director had no official knowledge.

SPORT FOR VISITORS

You must know that the Political Resident and I, his indefatigable Assistant, are anxious to hold on to our jobs as long as possible. But, should we incur the disfavour of those on high, we are liable to be turned out at short notice.

There are plenty of candidates envying our appointments, and some of them have uncles in Simla. So the burden is on us to ingratiate ourselves with all the High Officials and Eminent Personages who visit the State.

Both these classes of supermen labour under the delusion that they are born hunters of big game. Naturally enough, then, we work like slaves to provide them with good bags.

At the last visit of an Eminent Personage we received information from our C.I.D. that tiger were scarce. However, there was one reported to be at large in the neighbouring State, and our shikaris did their best to drive him over toward us, until they were themselves driven over by our neighbours, who selfishly wanted the animal to be shot by the E.P. on their territory. Still our men did not yield without a struggle, and the poor beast was driven to and fro for days until our neighbours called out their complete constabulary and military forces to restrain his wanderings.

Things began to look serious. The Eminent Personage was due in two days' time and so far there was no tiger for him to shoot. The Political Resident and I began to see our careers fading away before us.

However we left no stone unturned. We sent off the Director of Public Works to purchase tigers, dead or alive. He succeeded in getting two: one freshly killed, which was sent by rail, packed in ice, and one live but lethargic specimen in a cage.

The plan of operations was as follows. First we were to mount the Eminent Personage on the gigantic State elephant. The live tiger would then be let loose to parade before him. We knew from experience that the E.P. would blaze off wildly. He would be assured that he had scored a hit, and the follow-up would ensue. But, in order to allow time for the stage-management of the finale, the mahout would arrange for the elephant to bolt. By-and-by the elephant would be pacified and the hunt resumed, eventually resulting in the find of the dead tiger, by this time thawed out. Result, rejoicing on the part of the E.P. and congratulations to ourselves. If anything went amiss, as a last resource we could fall back on Abdul.

Abdul is the tiger belonging to the State Zoo. He is about forty years old. He is deeply attached to the keeper's son, an urchin of four. Abdul, being elderly, is rather lazy. He never takes any exercise beyond a little frolic with this urchin. Abdul is not much of a

SPORT FOR VISITORS

tiger to look at; his skin is a bit moth-eaten and his teeth are not what they were. We are all very fond of Abdul, but we would sacrifice him to keep our jobs.

The great day dawned. The State elephant jolted the E.P. along the jungle, while the Resident and I occupied the second-best elephant, who was also trained to bolt, in case it became necessary to create a diversion. The beaters began their song in the distance and, when they had advanced a little way, the Resident gave the secret signal for the loosing of the tiger.

Nothing happened. We waited a few minutes and then, leaving the E.P. at his post, rode off to make inquiries. We soon came across the tiger, not trotting lively through the undergrowth as a well-behaved tiger should, but crawling unsteadily and swaying from side to side. Close behind him followed the Director of Public Works and his band lamenting volubly and cursing the tiger, who at that moment fell over on his side, groaned and went to sleep.

It appeared that the Director, not wanting to waste an expensive tiger, had given him a stiff dose of opium before starting. Unfortunately the dose had been miscalculated by a grain or two, so that now we had two tigers on the ground and nothing moving for the E.P. to shoot at.

The Resident swallowed his rage. "Bring out Abdul!" he roared, and we on our elephant returned to the E.P. to tell him the tiger might be expected any moment now.

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There was another delay, so we signalled to the mahout to revolve the State elephant on its axis, in order to keep the E.P. amused during the recess. The E.P. was still revolving, with one hand to his head and the other gripping the side of the howdah, when a strange sight appeared.

It was the urchin, running at full speed, followed rather reluctantly by Abdul. A keen observer might have noted a length of string leading from his hand to Abdul's neck. We yelled to the E.P. to shoot, praying that in his excitement he would overlook the string.

The E.P. steadied himself as well as his gyroscopic mount would allow and fired, just as Abdul disappeared behind a bush. We quickly gave the E.P.'s mahout the bolting-signal, and the whole outfit left the scene with a noise of thunder. Meanwhile we hurried on to get Abdul out of the way or, in the worst event, to cut off the string.

Fortunately Abdul and the urchin were unharmed; we sent them back by secret ways.

By and by the State elephant returned, bringing back a shaken but still enthusiastic E.P. The Resident, who is a wonderful actor, told him breathlessly that he had scored a hit and that we must now follow up the wounded beast.

Slowly the elephants wound through the jungle, following imaginary pugs discovered by our shikaris, who know their business thoroughly. Then a cry, as we

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came upon the dead tiger. The whole party dismounted and approached.

"I congratulate Your——" began the Resident.

"He's very wet, isn't he?" inquired the E.P.—a very natural question, since the tiger was lying in a pool of the liquid which had thawed out of him.

"Er—tigers—er—sweat a good deal," replied the Resident, who in his excitement was doing the same thing himself.

The E.P. assumed a sceptical expression, and in my mind's eye I already saw him signing our transfer orders.

But I had not counted on the foresight and resource of the Resident. At a sign from him the urchin's father rushed forward and fell at the E.P.'s feet. From that position he could not be dislodged until he had for fifteen solid minutes invoked blessings upon the head of the Protector of the Poor who had saved his little son from a cruel death. The E.P. failed to grasp the substance of his remarks, so the Resident interpreted, pausing from time to time—a rare touch—to wipe a manly tear from his eyes.

During this performance the shikaris were enabled to begin their dissection of the tiger, so that, after one glance at the nasty mess they were making, the E.P. decided not to examine his trophy in detail.

The Resident and I are safe to remain here another couple of years, especially as we still have another tiger in stock—besides Abdul.

THE RAILWAY SYSTEM

THE Arampur State Railway connects with the British India network of lines at Dhuligaum Junction, where one is in touch with the great and bitter world. Everybody passes through Dhuligaum—viceroy, governors, globe-trotters, soldiers, railway-officials and worse.

Now and then one of them tries to leave the through train to the north and attempts to take the branch line to Arampur. But the mere sight of a European stranger puts our men and ourselves on their and our mettle. We don't want strangers in this paradise or the good thing will get about. Fortunately it is one hundred and seventy miles from Dhuligaum to Arampur, and during a run of that distance on the Arampur State Railway quite a number of things may happen.

The trains are not very fast, even when they are laying themselves out. The unfortunate traveller may be two days on the journey and there is no food available by the way. The Political Resident and the Assistant P.R. see to that. The identity and description of any visitor is telegraphed to us and we issue orders accordingly.

If he is somebody important from Simla, we have him delayed long enough to enable us to do some window-dressing and prepare for inspection. For this cunc-

THE RAILWAY SYSTEM

tatory purpose we usually rely on Balu, our spot engine-driver.

Other drivers may boast that they can drive safely at high speed or drive crazy engines over doubtful permanent ways, or do other things that excite wonder in the layman, but none can equal Balu at derailing a train. We have only to tell Balu what delay is required; he takes charge of the train and, with the aid of his brother, a platelayer, a derailment of the required seriousness takes place. Nothing could be simpler. The High Official, unable to obtain any other means of transport, is compelled to wait six or seven hours on the spot, leaving us ample time to dispatch the State cavalry upon distant manœuvres and to decide which official documents have been eaten by rats.

We can only delay a High Official, we cannot stop his advance altogether; that would create suspicion. But lesser men, such as travelling M.P.s are warned by station-masters that the line is blocked and that no food is obtainable. This is usually enough; they alight and take the first train back to Dhuligaum, having acquired material for an article in a Review and several speeches on Backward India.

Now and then a stubborn traveller, who has brought provisions with him, sets his teeth and decides to see the thing out. Then the local station-master, on the pretext of an alleged fault in the axle, induces the passenger to change carriages, himself personally superin-

tending the transfer of the luggage. Settled in his new quarters, the traveller discovers, after an interval that the new carriage is as motionless as the old, that his tiffin-basket has disappeared and that the station-master cannot be found. He is thus starved out, and it is only when in despair he has boarded the return train that his provision store comes to light again.

One day we heard that the Traffic Manager of a British India line had invaded the State, being ordered from Simla to pass judgment on the Arainpur State Railway System. We learned further that he had come in his own saloon, a bogey of the latest type, fitted with every modern convenience.

Now the Resident and I coveted that saloon. We had long wanted a saloon of that very kind. It could be slung on to any train which happened to pass and detached on any siding near a snipe jheel. We could then sleep overnight in the saloon, surrounded by modern conveniences, and tumble out at early morn right among the birds.

So, after personal instructions from us, Balu waited until he had got the saloon sixty miles over the border. He then, at night, moved the saloon and its sleeping occupant to a siding close up to the buffers, and behind it achieved one of his finest derailments.

In the morning the Traffic Manager could see for himself eight or ten heavy trucks piled up at artistic angles; Balu does this kind of thing perfectly. Glad to

THE RAILWAY SYSTEM

escape with his life, the T.M. scuttled back to Dhuli-gaum and civilization on a pump-trolley, leaving us the saloon.

The shooting is very enjoyable nowadays. No more rising at midnight and riding out to a jheel. We saloon it on the spot.

And how luxury grows on one! Yesterday the Resident was complaining that though we had electric light we still needed an electric cheroot-lighter.

Once a month we write a formal and polite note to the T.M., informing him that his saloon is still in State territory and requesting him either to make arrangements for its removal or, better, to come and fetch it personally. We are confident that after what he imagines to have been a providential escape from a severe mangling he will be content to let bygones be has-beens and take no serious action in the matter.

We send the letter, not to rub in our victory, but to put ourselves right at inspections. Any High Official would sit up at finding a saloon which was not entered in the dead-stock register. He would be unduly elated by the discovery of some discrepancy to report, and having among his connexions in Simla many candidates for our jobs he would spin out the affair to several sheets of condemnation of us and our methods. Or, worse still, he would take away the saloon for his own use.



WINNING FAVOUR

We have had another visit from an Eminent Personage. Having heard from some of our ill-wishers in Simla that Arampur State, owing to the ineptitude of the Political Resident and his assistant (me), was going from bad to worse, he was coming to see things for himself, to overhaul the mechanism of administration, to probe to the root of the canker, and to perform other unpleasant operations.

We met him at the railway station and gave him a high-class reception, but we saw at once that we were up against something special.

A lean, sombre man, his sunken eyes and pickled complexion betrayed the passing of many hot weathers in the East. He was clearly no home politician who had been inflicted on Simla against its will. It would be impossible to talk him off the point of every subject with a few random generalizations, or to reduce him to a state of reminiscence with an allusion to his political career. No, this was a hard-baked Kwi-Hai, with a good many years advantage over that fruity old campaigner, the Political Resident.

This Eminent Personage seemed to have no weaknesses. Our shikaris made themselves hoarse describing the glories of numerous imaginary tiger in the vicinity,

and the E.P. began personally to ransack the files of the Forest Department. Polo was played at 4 P.M. daily and the E.P. sat in a room in which the clicks and gallopings were plainly audible, poring over the previous year's Report of Finances.

The female half of the station exercised all their blandishments, but the E.P. remained sunk in silent thought over Budgets and Grants. You could almost see his lips framing the fatal question: "From what source is it proposed to raise the one-and-a-quarter lakhs needed to cover the deficit which has been revealed in the following Departments:

- (i) Public Works;
- (ii) Justice? and so on.

On the second day the Dewan took to his bed with some curious ailment of the eyes which prevented him from reading any official document, however boldly typed or printed. The Director of Public Works suffered a family bereavement which compelled him to mourn in solitude for fifteen days and to shave off his moustache—a device which made it quite certain that at any subsequent meeting the E.P. would fail to recognize him. The Conservator of Forests, while going his rounds, encountered a falling tree and was so severely damaged that it was dangerous to move him back to Arampur while the E.P. was busy scarifying his office. A really artistic accident this—"disabled while on duty." Besides it must have needed a thorough search

to find in the alleged forests a tree large enough to hurt even a beetle in its fall.

The Political Resident began to show signs of anxiety. "Another day or two of the E.P. among our offices," he observed, "and we can pack our trunks."

We went round to see the Raja, who, on receiving reports of the E.P.'s character, had discovered that he could no longer put off the thanksgiving ceremony which he had impiously postponed for several years. The Raja stood by us and emptied his cellars of all the choicer vintages for the E.P.'s entertainment. We hoped again, for the heel of Achilles is often found to have been diverted to his stomach.

The E.P. was flattered by the attention, and became absorbed in a wistful contemplation of the labels and the cobwebs on the bottles. For the first time we caught that gleam in the eye which distinguishes the human being from the inspecting officer. We were beginning to cheer up again when with a look of agony the E.P. drew himself away, ejaculating the one word "liver".

Our hopes crashed to the ground. We lost no time in removing the temptations. It was really rather decent of him to warn us for, if he had succumbed, the morning after would have sealed our fates. We have as much dislike as an Insurance Company has of incipient cirrhosis.

But the word 'liver' gave us a cue. We still had one weapon to use, the Civil Surgeon. A previous E.P. had

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been got rid of overnight by a feel of the pulse and a shake of the head. The Civil Surgeon does this very well indeed, but that sort of thing was too simple for a veteran of this type.

"I could mix him up a dope," said the Civil Surgeon thoughtfully, "which might alter his state of mind."

"Afraid it won't do," said the Political Resident. "It isn't enough to get him away; he must be got away in a good mood. We have seen his eye gleam once, so we know that it can gleam. We must make it gleam again."

We renewed our activities. We tried the State band, but the E.P. didn't care for music. He disliked racing. He found bridge too intellectual. He was too old for pig-sticking. He couldn't eat curry and all our hair-raising chutneys were wasted on him. His only interest seemed to be the office-table and every hour he spent there seemed to tighten the screws in our coffins.

Then, one evening on the verandah, the P.R. had finished all his stories. We juniors had laughed up heartily, though we had heard them all before, without awaking the faintest echo of mirth from the bored E.P. Hope was at its lowest ebb and complete inertia threatened when suddenly our young policeman exclaimed with the impetuosity of youth, "Let's play Chasing the Chinaman."

This not very abstruse game creates thrills of pleasure and pain at every turn of a card, until the appearance of the seven of hearts produces the final gasp of ecstasy

INDIAN FILE

and despair. We quickly seconded the lad in his project —at that moment we would have seconded a proposal to cut our throats in unison—and piled up our rupees on the cards. A sidelong glance at the E.P. revealed once more the veritable gleam. We were saved.

The game concluded at 4 A.M. The E.P. rose very late, and the next session began at 4 P.M. He never visited the offices again. He devoted all his tissue to the winning of piles of our hard-earned rupees.

We got rid of him finally on the pretext that at Pagalgau, four hundred miles away in another State, they ran a roulette-wheel.

The moral of this is that in the treatment of E.P.s one needs a full diplomatic equipment. Big game is not enough: one should also possess a Crown and Anchor board.

LIGHT ON POLICE ADMINISTRATION

SOME administrators judge their own effectiveness by the number of new regulations which they introduce. The Political Resident and the Dewan of Arampur know very well that the sandal is on the other foot. The less one interferes the more people govern themselves.

But this knowledge is not shared by all the officials who come to Arampur. We had a young policeman lately who arrived full of zeal and silver braid. The poor fellow had one shock after another. First of all he discovered, from the registers maintained in the police stations, that there was no crime at all. This would never do, for a policeman without a crime is like an inspecting officer without a discrepancy; he has no reason for existence. So he got busy at once searching for crime.

He had not to search long. After listening to a few complainants he discovered that burglaries were of frequent, and murders of occasional, occurrence in Arampur. In fact a crime wave was flowing and nobody was found to dam it. He forthwith instructed his subordinates to register these and all other complaints they might receive and investigate them. The subordinates with due solemnity complied, and the new policeman—his full title is Commissioner of Police, Arampur State—spent laborious days in reading their voluminous reports.

From these he learned that several moneylenders' houses had been looted. The victims were in the habit of extorting high rates of interest and had lately brought some of their clients to destitution. These clients, everybody knew, had burgled the houses as a rational method of righting admitted wrongs. Public sympathy was with them and the accused could produce any number of alibis, mutually inconsistent, but separately convincing. There was no possibility of conviction and so the crimes would be classed as undetected. The cold and practical logic of the situation persuaded the reformer that such cases could not be brought to a retributive finish.

There were other cases in which the complainant, having been robbed, accused certain persons. Now, as the police-station officer explained, the accused were men of no substance, so that there was no prospect of the complainant's ever getting his money back from them. His motive in complaining must therefore be one of sheer revenge or malice. He would be better advised to lock up his valuables in future than to come bothering the police to do the impossible and restore what was lost for ever.

In the case of the murders, investigation always showed that the deceased thoroughly deserved extinction and, had not the job been done in the way in which it had in fact been done, the man would certainly sooner or later have been murdered by somebody else. There

LIGHT ON POLICE ADMINISTRATION

was always a consensus of opinion in the village, accompanied by a concerted programme of innocence and ignorance, that the fellow was better dead, so why worry about the past, which could not be altered?

In the end our young policeman concluded that justice had been more efficiently served than was possible in the State courts. So he came to the Political Resident and eloquently confessed his error.

"I'm afraid, sir, I made a bloomer of that registration stunt. I simply poked a stick into my own eye. My name is absolutely mud."

"That's all right," answered the P.R. consolingly; "the quickest way to learn is by making a few bad mistakes."

"But I've jiggered the whole box o' works. Crime has gone up on the register from seven to round boiling point, and all undetected. My promising career is jolly well down the sink."

"Oh, come—is it as bad as that? After all, there are such things as epidemics of crime."

"Well, sir, I'll jolly well see this one dies out in two ticks. I'll go straight back and put a match to those mouldy registers."

"We must beware of hasty action. You want to stay in Arampur, don't you?"

"With due respect to you, sir, and all that rot, this is little Johnny's heaven."

"Very well, then, you must show some results for in-

INDIAN FILE

spection. If there is no change whatever in the crime figures you might just as well have stayed away from Arampur."

"This needs brain-power, I see," murmured the young policeman. "Perhaps I'd better leave the registers with all the spots on 'em and give word to the police-stations to stop registering on the nail."

"But in that case the complete and sudden cessation of crime would rouse the suspicions of the blandest inspecting officer."

"Stymied again. But somehow that seems better than a crime-storm going on indef."

"There is a better way and a simpler. Leave things alone. You will then find the statistics drop to somewhere about the normal and respectable seven because, left alone, the police-station officers will return to their normal habit. And in my annual report will occur the following words: 'A sudden and serious increase in crime caused the State officials some anxiety, but fortunately this coincided with the arrival in Arampur of the specially-deputed police officer, Mr. Griffin, whose able and sustained efforts succeeded in reducing. . . .'"

So Griffin is permanently one of us. The P.R. can rely upon his whole-hearted support in any emergency.

ROAD PROBLEMS

WHEN the Simla season is drawing to a close, we begin to dress our windows in Arampur. All the Departments are braced up for possible inspection, and their Heads study Parliamentary debates in order to have at their command a selection of meaningless but convincing replies.

The cost of living in Simla is notoriously high, so that the poor fellows who have stayed through the season at that health resort have to look about for some means to replenish their depleted exchequers. For this purpose there is nothing better than an inspection tour. At the worst they are accommodated regally and free of cost at every one of their pitches, which they continue to draw Halting Allowance under the Rules. Generally they do well enough on the Halting Allowances and double first-class fares on the railway; and a man who travels by rail from Simla to Calicut may reasonably be considered to have earned something. But if the inspecting official is really hard up he banks upon making mileage.

News of the approach of a Mileage-Monger is received in the Free and Independent States with something approaching alarm, because it does not suit the M.-M.'s book to stay in a headquarters office under a fan and pick holes in registers. He counts upon travel-

ling in somebody else's car as many miles as he can and drawing eight annas per mile for himself. Thus he is sure to choose for inspection some distant police-station or kutcherry. The inspected buildings and offices may usually be trusted to defend themselves, but the roads always give themselves away.

To be candid, the Arampur State roads are not as a rule suitable for motor-traffic. They usually consist of two deep ruts and a young range of mountains between them. No car which has not a four-foot clearance can make any headway along them.

But we have one splendid road, from Arampur City to the railway station. This is the road to which all eminent persons are kept, but it is so short as to be of little use to a Mileage-Monger. It is not easy for him to profess that his duties compel him to traverse this road fifty times a day.

There was something like a panic among us when it became known that old Bostock, the Lipton of Milcage, was to pay us a visit and that roads were to be his pretext.

Fortunately we had a month's notice of his advent, so that the Political Resident and the Dewan had time to put their heads together. When the P.R. and the Dewan are working as a team, Machiavelli and Iago are by comparison mental defectives. The rest of us felt that all would be well.

The Director of Public Works, who is primarily responsible for the roads, is an amiable man but unim-

ROAD PROBLEMS

aginative. His only idea was to catch an infectious disease just before the inspection. I must say that he has a distinct talent for developing strange symptoms of a distressing kind at very short notice, but even in deluding people from Simla a little variety is desirable. So the thing simply had to be taken out of his hands.

The Dewan got every able-bodied man in the State on to the work. I never knew what the work was; I trusted the P.R., for I knew he was never mysterious without a reason. That is what I call loyalty.

It was impossible to repair in a single month the neglect of several generations; there was not enough prepared road-metal in the whole world to set the Arampur State roads on a sound footing. I heard, moreover, all the activity was centred on one spot.

The work was finished with three days to spare. Old Bostock was received with full honours, shown the map of the State with the roads boldly marked and asked which he would care to traverse. He announced, as expected, that he would traverse the lot. Two days in the car, the P.R. thought, would do it.

Next morning he started off rather late, with the P.R. at his side, and returned in the afternoon highly delighted and handing out congratulations to everybody. Next day the programme was repeated. The third day the Mileage-Monger left to continue his inspection elsewhere, after announcing that the Arampur State roads were a model for the whole of, including British, India.

INDIAN FILE

Puzzled, I rode out quietly and privately to view the scene of the crime. I noticed for the first time a new road, leading off the familiar and well-beaten station-road. This lead to a bifurcation. I took one of the prongs and was surprised to find that after a quarter of a mile it conducted me back by way of the other prong to the original point of bifurcation. All was revealed to my quick intelligence in a moment. Old Bostock had simply been driven for two days round and round this circle.

I could quite well see the P.R., whenever Bostock seemed inclined to examine the landscape, indicating some imaginary position from time to time on the map, or telling him one of his choicer stories. And no doubt after a hundred or so round old Bostock would doze a little in the heat and yield to the pleasure of being conveyed smoothly along an excellent surface at eight annas per mile. Moreover, the scenery of the plains is very much the same everywhere and the sun is so high overhead that one ignores one's shadow.

The P.R. met me on my return. His grin showed me that he knew where I had been.

"I've seen your little Brooklands," I remarked.

His grin broadened. I spoke to him as severely as it is possible to speak to one's chief.

"That comes," I observed, "of having been educated at Alexandra Park."

POPULAR TRANSPORT

THE Arampur State Railway is a really popular institution; we have nothing like it in Europe.

Third-class carriages, intended to hold twelve persons habitually carry any number up to fifty. The ticket-examiner performs his function by bundling out the passengers on to the platform and re-admitting them one by one after he has searched the mass of hand-luggage for concealed children. Even on this system he has to be wary, or one of the early entrants will get out by the opposite window, clamber round the end of the carriage, pass his ticket to a relation and regain his place by the same devious route. The relation presents the same ticket, being careful to keep his thumb on the punched portion, and joins the original holder.

Those who can show no ticket are not at all harshly treated. They explain at length to the ticket-examiner the exact circumstances in which it was lost and he benevolently excuses them on their tendering four annas apology-money. Those again who are known to him as Government or railway officials or relatives of such are admitted even with apology or money. Likewise all sadhus and fakirs travel free, lest they should bring the train to a standstill with their curses.

For the rest, any ticket will do for any distance. In

fact, the booking-clerk, whatever money is tendered at the window, usually issues a ticket for the first station down the line, knowing that to illiterate passengers one ticket is as good as another.

✓The booking-clerk, like the other officials, gets no regular pay and he has to keep body and soul together. To our Occidental minds this appears a reprehensible system, but I have found after experience that it works very well indeed and pans out pretty evenly all round, not a single person being victimized. The engine-driver does a nice little side-line in selling fuel. The porters have the heavy baggage to pick over and the guards have a free choice of uninsured parcels. The signalmen levy a small charge on each train, ballast or passenger, before the signal is lowered. The station-master is less well off; he draws no steady income from day to day, but does very well in the cotton season by selling trucks to merchants.

It is essential for the latter to get their product into British India as early as possible, and they are willing to pay high prices for truck-accommodation. Long before the crop comes in, the station-master begins to collect trucks. Any empty truck which passes through is detached and detained; short-loaded trucks have their loads re-distributed so as to leave one or more empty, and rolling-stock accumulates to the limit of the yard's capacity. Then, on a day, the trucks are auctioned to the merchants. This is the station-master's annual harvest.

The engineers earn their living by employing only a fourth of the coolies whose names are entered on the pay-roll. The storekeepers, by arrangement with the contractors, enter rather more ballast and supplies than they actually receive. Everybody is provided for except the General Manager, who gets only what presents he can prevail upon his subordinates to offer on festival days.

He is really worse off than the keepers of level-crossings, one of whom has the spot job of the whole service. This man's particular crossing holds up the traffic on one of the chief streets of Arampur City, and he has a fixed tariff : three pies for a foot-passenger, one anna for a cart, four annas for a carriage, and twelve annas for a wedding procession. Any Head of a Railway Department would gladly exchange his position and his prestige for that level-crossing, which is held at present by an LL.B. (failed), a brother-in-law of the Dewan.

I think the Arampur system might be tried in England as a remedy against strikes and public grumbling. The self-imposed and customary taxes create no bad feeling; everybody is satisfied. And the Arampur State Railway, besides giving adequate service, is run at a slight profit, duly exhibited and demonstrated in the exquisite books kept by the Secretary, a cousin of the Dewan.

It is no use trying to alter things. A neighbouring

State lately imported a European to reorganize its railway. The dour man began by making rules of a pettifogging nature. It had been the custom in that State for every passenger to buy a dog-ticket. As I have said, one ticket is as good as another, and a dog-ticket is the cheapest obtainable.

Well, this European reformer issued orders that all dogs travelling on dog-tickets should henceforth wear a collar and chain or lead; the same to apply to goats travelling on goat-tickets. The public met him good-humouredly and duly donned collars, complete with chains or leads. It was quite usual to see two self-appointed dogs leading each other to the booking-office.

But the silly reformer was not content with this victory; he went on tyrannously to order that all dogs travelling on dog-tickets should travel in the dog-box.

This was too much and the reformer was quickly hustled Home on leave before any actual insurrection could occur.

Parkinson's QUININE

It has been said of the cinchona-tree that its bark is worse than its bite. This I can scarcely credit, when I consider my personal experience. But before relating it I will introduce some of those general considerations with which every serious record should begin.

Formerly it was a matter of common knowledge that quinine was an absolute specific for malaria; in fact, the only real specific known to medicine. Quinine attacked and killed the malarial germs in the blood in a million hand-to-hand struggles.

It is now known that all this is untrue—a perfect example of the progress of medical science. The present idea is that quinine is merely a dope or tonic for the phagocytes; and I am quite prepared to hear in a few years' time that it is only the medium of a faith-cure.

Anyhow, I am quite certain that in India, where even health is militarized, an illness is often regarded as a court-martial affair, quinine is still used as an instrument of discipline. Old Colonel Blackrigg, Civil Surgeon at Arampur, used to boast that he had banished malaria from the region. He defied any one to show him a real case. And certainly nobody cared to approach him a second time with complaints of ague or high recurring

fever. Thus, so far as his knowledge went, malaria had been stamped out of Arampur.

When I first came to the State—I was of course very young at the time—I did not know what beneficial work he had done in clearing the district of the disease, so when he asked in his genial manner, “Well, what the blazes is the matter with you?” I innocently answered, “Malaria, I think, Sir.”

“Nonsense,” said he affably, “don’t tell me that rot.” But when he had examined me he felt slightly less confident. Be well in good

“You just need a stiff dose of quinine,” was his second pronouncement.

“But, Sir,” I objected, “I have already taken two bottles of quinine.”

“Yes,” he roared, “I know; that muck in tablet form. That stuff is useless; you can’t even taste it.”

It seemed that taste was an essential part of the cure.

“Powder for you, my boy,” he vociferated: “ten grains three times a day. And don’t let me hear you mention the word malaria again.”

However, the fever persisted and I was obliged to consult him once more.

“Are you taking that quinine regularly?” he inquired.

“Yes, Sir; as you ordered.”

“Then double the dose; you aren’t taking enough. Why, your hearing isn’t affected yet.”

QUININE

Evidently the Colonel was alarmed, for he began to come to my bungalow three times a day and make me absorb the vile stuff in his presence. I had overcome some of the horror of the powder by rolling it in a cigarette paper and swallowing the whole. On his first visit he caught me in the act and a terrible scene followed.

"I tell you," he thundered, "you must *taste* it. Do you think I'm going to let a young tick like you have malaria in my district? Now pour a twenty-grain packet into some lime-juice and drink it up. I'll be back before tiffin to see you take your second dose."

At the end of the week I was quite deaf as a result of the drug, and we communicated by means of pencil and paper. This, so to speak, took the edge off his tongue. His diction became, shall we say, less colloquial, but he was as determined as ever.

"Glad to know you are deaf," he wrote; "another week's course and your digestion won't be worth two-pence."

His prediction proved correct. Within a few days, I was experiencing all the after-horrors of *homard à l'Américaine* without having enjoyed the previous ecstasy.

A later written message ran: "The quinine is acting splendidly; your eyesight should begin to fail very soon."

Next day I gave in. Before his arrival I had prepared

my opening speech: "I am now quite cured. I can never be sufficiently grateful to you for your . . ."

His face glowed with delight.

"What did I say?" he wrote briskly. "I knew it."

Then he gave me a look and started writing again.

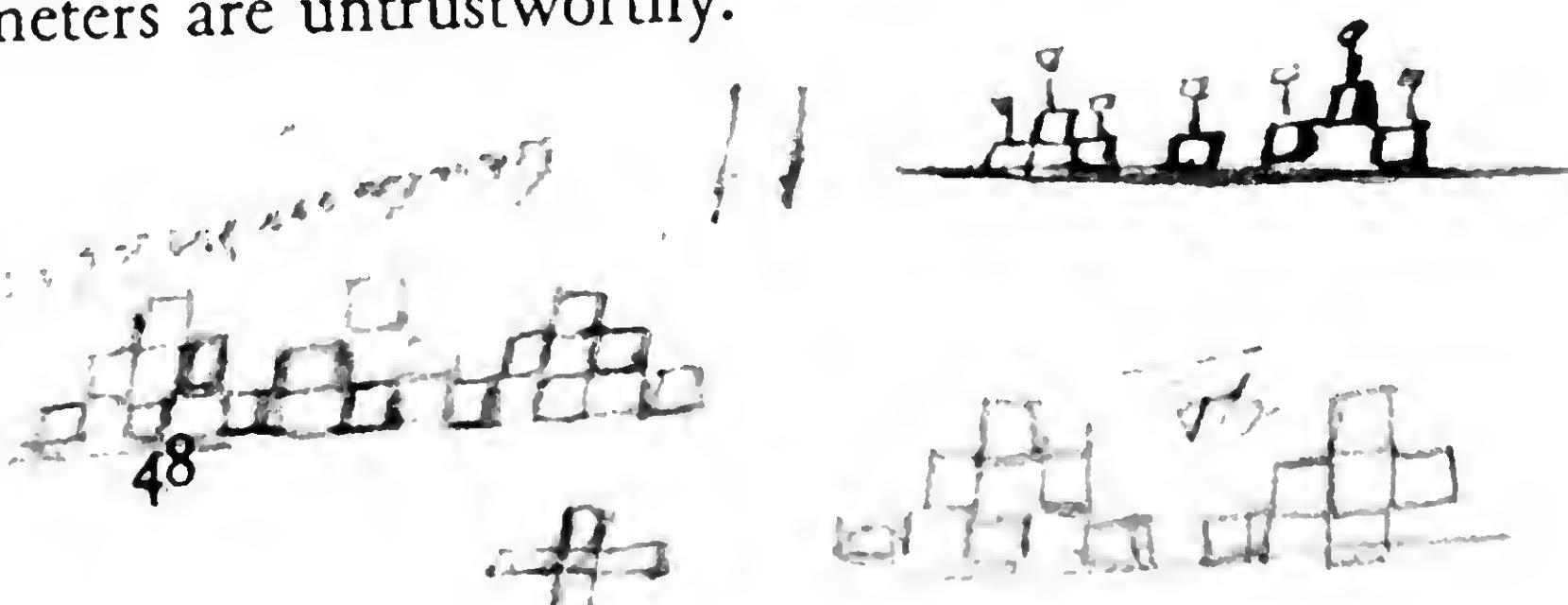
This time his message was, "If you are well, why are you trembling like that?"

I must deceive him or that quinine would kill me. I pretended not to be able to read his writing, in order to gain time. Then at last I said, "I always tremble in the presence of senior officers."

He looked at me in an almost fatherly manner, then he stooped and wrote again. The next moment he was waving good-bye.

When he had been gone a short time I pulled the paper towards me. His last words were, "There is nothing like quinine." And for once I heartily agreed with him.

I must admit that I have never had malaria since that day. True, my teeth have sometimes chattered involuntarily, and I have on occasion registered as high as one-hundred-and-two, but that was not malaria. Oh, no! I am of a nervous temperament and after all, thermometers are untrustworthy.



A TRIUMPH OF DETECTION

THE latest arrival at Arampur from Simla was an eminent Personage with a title. He was too grand to poke about in the offices examining figures in account-books. He inspected the State in a most lordly way, relying, as he said, on his own observations and impressions. Of course we gave him every opportunity of observing and being informed. That is to say, we showed him some good sport, we lost money to him at bridge, and we made his evenings bright and happy. All went well until the third day, when the E.P. lost his cigarette-case.

He made a terrible fuss about this and insisted upon laying a formal complain of theft. It would, he professed, test the efficiency of the Police Department. Young Griffin, who is the star of that department, got rather flurried and called to Arampur all his subordinates in outlying parts to help in the task. The Resident and I began to interest ourselves in the Problem of the Purloined Cigarette-Case, and the Dewan got to work quietly, making inquiries among the members of his family, who are distributed among the different departments.

Griffin and his inspectors invaded the E.P.'s apartments on the pretext of reconstructing the crime, but

really in order to cross-examine the servants. These seemed honestly bewildered. They averred that the E.P. was inclined to be absent-minded. He had been known for instance, to walk about with the office pin-cushion in his hand, after throwing his spectacle-case into the waste-basket, his giant brain all the time at work upon problems of administration. They went on to suggest that while playing tennis he had perhaps served with his cigarette-case and put the ball into his pocket! There seemed no end to the possibilities of substitution. Griffin and the entire Force were kept busy inquiring from hostesses whether they had missed a finger-bowl or an ormolu clock.

We all fancied ourselves full of detective ability. Theory succeeded theory, each being adopted in our councils to begin with and then disposed of by means of relentless logic. It was unlikely that the E.P. had dropped the thing somewhere in the jungle, because he was always surrounded by a crowd of attendants in case he should come to any harm from wild beasts or snakes. It was possible that the E.P. had locked up his cigarette-case in his confidential box; so the Resident spent a whole afternoon in official conversation with him, when he might have been playing polo, raising one subject after another until at last recourse was compelled to some confidential papers. But the open box revealed no cigarette-case. Even then the E.P. was rather short with the Resident for peering over his shoulder.

After this, the Resident concluded that the E.P. had lost the case before coming to Arampur. The Dewan persisted in the Oriental method of annoying the servants continually until some information should leak out. Their boxes were searched seven times a day and they were always under cross-examination by the Police.

Griffin himself became very professional. He called on the E.P. and put him through a severe grilling as to his former dealings with the cigarette-case. This is a favourite device of Griffin with complainants. After being worried and badgered for hours, they often ask to withdraw the complaint altogether. But in this case the only result was an impression left on the E.P.'s mind that Griffin was a headstrong and tactless youngster.

Meanwhile the E.P.'s catholic inspection proceeded. One after another we were getting into hot water and the E.P.'s report on our officials would certainly be of the kind to condemn us for ever to the lower ranks of the services. But we stuck at it, and at last Fortune took our side.

One morning, in my turn, I had taken out the E.P. for an hour or two among the snipe and afterwards I sat with him in his verandah over a peg. Then, as he leaned forward, I noticed a bright object gleam in the side-pocket of his very antique shooting-coat. Quicker than thought, I knocked over the E.P.'s glass with my elbow, distracting his attention long enough to enable me to transfer the case from his pocket to my own.

Then occurred a fearful scene. The E.P. really lost his temper with me, and for a moment I saw myself compulsorily retired not only from Arampur but from India. However, by being abject in my apologies I removed several layers of his resentment. At length I withdrew with that assurance of eventual victory which gives one more courage than any sense of righteousness can do.

It seems that one of the E.P.'s iron laws in his household was that the pockets of his shooting coat were never to be touched by anybody other than himself. This rule had been made to prevent the absence of a number of small objects which he only used when shooting. His boy, with an Indian's addiction to routine, accepted the order and never looked into the pockets again, even when required by the exigencies of a crime-investigation.

Then began the artistic development of the theme. First the Resident whispered to the E.P. that Griffin had secured some valuable finger-prints. Next he divulged news that the Dewan had received secret information from his own peculiar underworld as to the identity of the thief.

Everybody who came in contact with the E.P. took pains to assure him that the recovery of the case was only a matter of hours. All inquiry from servants was ostentatiously stopped, and smiling faces all round restored the general confidence. Finally, after rehearsal to make all perfect, the great scene was staged.

The Resident, supported by all the officials, British and Indian, advanced upon the E.P. and announced the success of the investigation. The cigarette-case, specially polished for the occasion, was solemnly given back to its rightful owner. It was a long story the Resident told, of the following of clues, of stratagems and devices, and during his narrative he contrived to mention the part played by every State official individually. To me special honour was given for having caught with my own hands the actual thief, just as he was about to escape across the border.

A noted City bad-character, one Bhagu, was with his own consent produced as the culprit. He was hand-cuffed and led away by a strong guard before the eyes of the E.P. A good climax, full of spirited action.

The E.P., hugging his cigarette-case, outdid all his predecessors with his compliments. He expressed himself delighted with the superb efficiency of every single department of the State, and shook me personally by the hand.

"Very good, my boy," said he, "I forgive even your knocking over my drink."

The day after the departure of the E.P. Bhagu was released and given a handful of rupees, many more than the amount usually paid for similar services.

Thus ended a really perfect police case, and Griffin's registers showed one up under the heading 'Detected.'

A DOUBLE PLAN

THE inspection season seemed to be over in Arampur State. The weather was warming up and we were looking forward to relaxing a little from the strenuous life, when suddenly a telegram arrived for the Political Resident.

The office of origin was Simla, and the telegram read:

Inspector steam boilers prime movers visits Arampur twelfth.

The communication was brisk and, as usual, not very complete, for the one thing about which Simla is economical is a telegram. Translated from telegraphese into English, this appeared to mean that The Inspector of Steam Boilers and Prime Movers would visit Arampur on the 12th of May. The capitals made all the difference, and the word 'Inspector' always gives us cold shivers.

The following questions at once arose:

- (1) With what intention was the I.S.B.P.M. visiting Arampur?
- (2) What kind of reception would he expect?
- (3) Who was the I.S.B.P.M., and did he pull any weight at Headquarters?

The Political Resident and I discussed these points, and at once realized that Question (3) was pivotal, not

to say cardinal. These are jolly good words to use when talking to Inspecting Officers, and we make a point of using them freely between ourselves so as to become really familiar with them.

Until we knew the identity and functions of the I.S.B.P.M., we were all at sea. We rallied the other State Officials and consulted them. Everybody knew or pretended to know what a steam boiler was, but the only one known to exist in the State was a boiler connected with the ginning-mill at the railway station. But surely nobody from Simla would want to inspect that. With the best intentions in the world it could not occupy an Inspecting Officer longer than ten minutes. The greater part of this time would have to be spent over Prime Movers.

Here was the crux of the whole thing. What were Prime Movers? The Civil Surgeon professed himself unable to find the disease in any of his books. The Director of Education, a hopeless highbrow, could recall only one instance of the use of the phrase in literature, namely in an apostrophe of Leonardo da Vinci's beginning '*con tal potenza, o primo movere . . .*' This was not very helpful, so we fell back on other sources.

The Conservator of Forests, a rather stupid man, thought that 'The Prime Mover', in Arampur at any rate, must mean either the Political Resident or the Dewan, but he offered no suggestion as to how these were to be inspected.

We looked up some old Government *Gazettes*, to get some hint of the duties and personality of the I.S.B.P.M. He was apparently immortal, since there was no record of anybody in the past ever having been appointed to this important office. It seemed he was never posted anywhere, nor did he receive any pay. He appeared to live in a half-world of his own. Now and then in the *Gazette*, somebody or other, after receiving the report of the I.S.B.P.M., passed orders in accordance with his recommendation. But the recommendation itself was not printed, so that we could still gather no hint as to the nature of his activities.

In the end it was decided, by the Political Resident, to arrange to receive him with drugget and a decent display of uniform. Meanwhile, I was instructed to go forward to Dhuligaum, where the State railway begins, and make some inquiries. I was to wire back any information I could gather about our mysterious visitor. To avoid possibility of error, the Resident would receive me a few stations out of Arampur and receive my verbal report.

I was a little uneasy about the issue for, supposing that the I.S.B.P.M. was a man of no importance at Simla or worse, a man of the un gazetted caste, he could not be received at Arampur station with band and drugget. Besides outraging the State Officials, it would be very uncomfortable for the visitor. Yet it would be a flat affair if all the officials turned up in their gay clothes and

A DOUBLE PLAN

found nobody to receive. I could not see how the Resident was going to prevent a fiasco, but experience has taught me to rely on him implicitly.

I passed a day at Dhuligaum telephoning down the line and obtaining information. The train from Simla, I was told, had no saloon attached. Later I learned that a single European was on board, travelling second-class. There was no other train that day.

As the train entered Dhuligaum, I took up an unpro-
minent position on the platform. A tall, lean figure alighted from a second-class compartment and changed to the Arampur train, followed by three servants, one of whom carried a heavy bag of tools.

(I came forward and addressed the stranger)

"Are you the Inspector of Steam Boilers and Prime
Movers?" I inquired.

"Ay," he replied, "and ye'll be the laird o' Arampur."

I corrected the inaccuracies in his description and rushed off a full wire to the Resident up the line. I then re-entered our private saloon and travelled home-wards, assuring myself at every stop that the I.S.B.P.M. was still on the train. I was very careful about this; it would not do for me to bungle anything. If I let the Resident down, I am not long for Arampur.

At the appointed place the Resident joined me and during the rest of the journey he changed from musti into full dress. We drew up at Arampur amid cheering

crowds and while the Resident was standing on the drugget and greeting all the officials whom he had seen only two days before, preparatory to inspecting the guard, I quietly took out the I.S.B.P.M. by a side-entrance and installed him in a *dak* bungalow with some beer.

Later, when the crowd had dispersed, I showed him the steam boiler in the gin. Without opening his tool-bag, he disposed of it with a Glasgow sniff.

I then asked him frankly: "Will you tell me—of course I ought to know—what exactly is a Prime Mover?"

He jerked his thumb towards the boiler. "Yon's a Prime Mover," said he.

I took him back to the *dak* bungalow and told him by what train he could leave as he had already inspected all the Steam Boilers and Prime Movers in the State. "Ye're richt," he replied, "I condemnit yon boiler two yearrs alang."

He was a shrewd understanding fellow and he taught me with that simple jerk of his thumb what it has cost hundreds of Indian officials years of research to discover. Even now most of them have the haziest ideas on the subject.

But I at least am in sure possession of the knowledge that a Prime Mover is a steam boiler in a dangerous condition.

DEPARTMENT OF JAILS AND PRISONS

PEOPLE may rave about the blessings of cinemas and libraries in the penal establishments of enlightened Europe, but for real solid comfort give me the Arampur State jail every time.

As Assistant Political Resident, I am *ex-officio* a Member of the Jail Inspection Board. This Board turns out once a month in bright clothing to make a formal inspection of the jail. The guard is scrutinized in the usual manner, and we enter between rows of happy, healthy convicts to examine meticulously clean cells. We inspect the pile of mats and sacks made by the inmates. We watch the food being prepared and taste samples to assure ourselves of its quality. It is invariably of the best; I only wish my Goanese could make a curry like that. At length we sign the Visitors' Book and depart. The gate clashes behind us, the guard salutes and the inspection is over. Everything is declared by the Board to be perfectly satisfactory.

The Annual Reports show that for years the jail has been maintained in a condition of perfect and humane discipline, that the staff is adequate and capable, that complaints are rare, and that the Superintendent (who is a brother-in-law of the Dewan) is a man of high character. The jail is absolutely inspection-proof.

INDIAN FILE

But there is another life which goes on in the jail, apart from inspections. When I was a newcomer to the State, I was enthusiastic and maladroit enough to pay a surprise visit, rather early one morning. To my disgust I found that the guard had vanished and that the gate stood open. This was unusual, I thought, for a jail, but what was more unusual was that none of the prisoners was making any attempt to escape. I entered the courtyard and observed the convicts in all stages of undress squatting round the central tank and brushing their teeth with the conscientiousness and concentration which mark the Oriental engaged in dental ablutions. I felt I was intruding upon somebody's private apartment and withdrew, conscious of committing a *faux pas*.

Since then I have gathered information about the jail from various sources. This information I have collated and am now able to offer you in the form of the present monograph.

Admission to Arampur jail, then, is not a compulsory sequel to conviction in the courts. It is the result of earnest endeavour and wire-pulling, of steady scheming and planning with a single eye to the object in view. One could enter the most exclusive club in the world with less loss of tissue, for the waiting list comprises everybody who is not filling a snug job outside.

The mortality is low (*vide* Annual Report) and there are unfortunately not more than a hundred-and-twenty cells so that vacancies seldom occur. Life passes very

pleasantly as one lounges in the central courtyard and smokes. Now and then, during the heat of the day, one dozes in one's cell and afterwards there is plenty of jolly conversation and anecdote until far into the night. The meals are plentiful and well-served. If one wants variety, one can always borrow a warder's clothes and go into the bazaar. In that case it is better to stay out until morning, for some thoughtless person may have closed the gate. But one soon learns that there is no place like home, and when one is inside it is comforting to turn the key and keep out undesirable visitors. After all, the people inside know each other and are very happy by themselves.

The warders are good fellows, eager to help in bringing cigarettes and so on from the town and really studying their guests' comfort, for they are the most likely candidates for any vacancy which may occur. When a convict is moribund or in spite of his efforts is discharged, the warder is the first to hear of it; he therefore loses no time in securing for himself a conviction in the courts. If he knows the right people he can arrange the witnesses against himself, get himself arrested and secure a committal all within twenty-four hours. The evening after the vacancy occurs the successful warder has changed his clothes and takes his place among the élite.

There is always a chance that a rival may succeed in getting him off with a fine or, later, may contrive for him a remission of part of his sentence or, worse still, a

free pardon. But his own connexions will watch this possibility and try to secure a life-sentence with some words of condemnation from the judicial authority.

A new warder is appointed and things go on as before. The spirit of *camaraderie* prevails in the institution, and the prisoners are often found to give a hand to the warders in the necessary work such as the cleaning-up for inspection and the arrangement of the mats and sacks which have to be exhibited on these occasions. The former superintendent, they say, was an unreasonable fellow who insisted on new things being made to take the place of those which had been inspected for generations. After several good-natured attempts had been made to meet his wishes, some excellent mats were procured from a jail in British India. These can be depended on to last for years, so long as the stone saucers which protect them from ants are kept filled with water.

The same martinet had confiscated all the opium he found being brought into the jail. Opium was apparently scarce at the time, and he needed all he could get for his own consumption. The prisoners sympathized to some extent with this point of view once they understood that he was working for his own good and not merely interfering with their lives. Still the confiscation was thought to be in bad taste.

The present incumbent is a model superintendent; he is never seen in the jail except on inspection days, but he does his best to watch the jail's interests among the

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governing classes. Whenever the Political Resident makes any tactful inquiries about the jail the superintendent is sure to send up next day a batch of convict-volunteers to weed the Residency garden.

There was a prominent convict named Ram Lal who lately brought to a happy ending what might have been an unfortunate incident. He had left the jail for a few days in mufti, to visit his friends in a distant village and while there was arrested by the police on some trumpery charge of dacoity—as though a native of Arampur would take the risk of being incarcerated elsewhere.

However, thinking he was being taken to some other destination, he induced his captors to partake of some medicated wine, by whose potency they were soon reduced to the semblance of logs. A fellow-prisoner, native of another State, who was being conveyed with the same escort, thanked Ram Lal for his brotherly service and departed after assuring him that his fears were unfounded and that they were actually on the way to Arampur. Ram Lal at once took pains to repair his hasty action. He poured cold water on the police heads, dragged the men to their feet and led them by a rope in a straight line for home, where he arrived just in time to complete the *cadre* for inspection.

The Board noticed this curious detachment joining the parade, but carefully refrained from remarking on it until the superintendent should have had time to prepare a convincing explanation.

FREIGHTS AND PASSENGERS

THE Arampur State Railway has the lowest freight-rates in the world. If you take a consignment of any goods you like to any goods office, the clerk will often accept it without bothering you for payment. Nor will he trouble you with any of those officious regulations which hamper the transfer of goods in other countries—the filling-up of forms, the meticulous labelling, the special packing, the elaborate sealing and so on. No; you just hand in your goods and that is the end of the matter.

That is absolutely the end of the matter, for if the goods are of any value whatever, they will never be heard of again. The consignee may harass the local railway officials as much as he likes, he may cause an inquiry to be instituted, or may start down the line to look for the stuff himself ; but it is all the same in the end. The consignment cannot be traced.

After some experience the consignor begins to realize that this is not really a profitable business, shipping goods which never arrive. He makes inquiries and discovers that in order to make certain of delivery he should insure the goods. The insurance rates are extremely high, averaging about forty per cent of the value of the goods, but then the freights' are so low! You cannot have it every way.

FREIGHTS AND PASSENGERS

Insured goods are stored in the guard's compartment, which stands (or rolls) at the end of the goods wagon. This compartment has a door leading to the main goods wagon and permits a view into the dog-box.

The official regulations prescribe that at junctions the guard shall alight, unlock the six doors of the goods wagon, put in his tally to the station-master, watch carefully the six open doors, check all goods recovered by private persons, at the same time keeping his eye on the off-side doors, which he must assure himself from time to time are securely locked. If the guard attempted to perform half these duties, he would never get the train off, besides winning for himself a persistent neurasthenia and an abnormal squint. So, as a rule, he does not attempt the impossible but just leans against his door smoking a cigarette and exchanging gossip with the station-master.

The rules he observes are of a different kind and may be codified thus:

1. Insured parcels are the perquisite of the guard and may not be examined or tampered with except under the guard's orders.
2. General merchandise in closed vans is at the disposal of inferior railway servants only.
3. General merchandise in open vans is common property.

These rules form the unwritten Magna Charta of the line and each beneficiary class is careful not to infringe

on the rights of others. For instance, no railway servant has ever been known to inspect with any care an open van. The practice is for private persons, in collusion with the lesser railwaymen, to board the train while it is in slow motion ascending a slope, throw the sacks from open vans on to the line and, having dismounted, collect them at leisure. Meanwhile the railway servants are occupied in sharing out the choicer contents of the closed vans and the guard is sampling the insured parcels.

All outside evidence on the running of the railway shows that this system is strictly adhered to. Recently a live shell was sent up the line, booked as an insured parcel, for the gunners at Pagalgaum to play with. The guard was fascinated by this strange casing, which evidently contained something valuable. After attacking it fruitlessly with a tin-opener all the way from Dhuligaum, he handed it over for some subordinates to tackle. These withdrew into a field by night with the mysterious parcel and an iron crow-bar, with the result that next day there were three vacancies on the staff and a hole in the ground of the field which its owner could only attribute to malevolent spirits. For quite a fortnight everything travelled safely with that guard.

As Club Secretary, I lately found that our supplies were desperately short. The expected cases of reinforcement had arrived at Dhuligaum and I wanted to make certain that they reached us before we succumbed to

thirst—a miserable death. So I went myself to claim them.

There was no room in our saloon for the bulk of the goods, so perforce I registered them and personally saw them stowed away beside the guard. At every stop I walked back along the platform to the van to make sure they were still safe.

At the first stop I noticed nothing wrong. At the second I observed that some of the wires had been cut and lightly replaced. At the third I noticed that the general goods van was unusually full of minor railway servants. At the fourth I found that the bars of the dog-box had been loosened and that there was an avid look on the lips of the passengers in the now congested goods van. Between stations I saw hordes of villagers attempting to board even the closed vans—a gross breach of the terms of the Charta. News of the nature of my consignment had gone all up the line and for an hour the system trembled in the balance.

I had my personal property removed from the saloon and I passed the rest of the journey in the guard's seat, with the result that the goods arrived at Arampur without a single item missing—a record for the line.

Thus by one act of devotion I both saved the lives of the European community and upheld the unwritten law of the railway, for of course I gave the guard a generous sample. In a way, he was entitled to the lot. One must play the game.

ACROSS THE BORDER

IN Arampur, as in other places nearer home, we often laugh at our policemen, but there is more in their job than outsiders usually suppose. Recently our young friend Griffin went away on short leave and in a weak moment I offered to do his work, in addition to my own duties, during his absence.

Almost as soon as I received control of the Force, a murder occurred. At any rate a murder was reported. I did not pay much heed to it at first; I just ordered an Inspector to make investigation on the spot and to submit immediately a full report. I have said already that I am quite good at administrative work.

Shortly after, a short conversation with the Inspector showed me that in the Police line executive ability was demanded, as well as purely administrative. The Inspector told me that, from rumours which had reached him, the corpse which appeared to be proof positive of a serious crime had been planted on us by the Police of Pagalgaum, a neighbouring State.

I set off with the Inspector to the scene of the finding, and on my way I was apprised by him of the system which prevailed with regard to homicide. Each State naturally wanted to keep its registers clear of serious

crimes, but so long as a corpse actually existed it was difficult to pretend that it was unconnected with a crime. If the identity of the corpse was established, it was often possible to show, with the aid of the local Hospital Assistant, that the deceased had a long history of ill health, with cardiac or hepatic complications. Or it might be demonstrated by unimpeachable evidence that he had been bitten by a snake. But when the corpse was that of a burly stranger and bore signs of dagger-marks, matters were less easy.

The usual procedure was to dump the body over the border and thus permit the neighbouring State to be burdened with an extra murder on its conscience and, worse, on its Crime Register. In this case Pagalgaum had followed the traditional plan, and unless we took prompt measures the Arampur Police would have to submit to the disgrace of an undetected murder on its books.

Once I had grasped the situation, I thought of several devices. The Inspector also did some thinking. The obvious course was to put the corpse back where it had come from, but the Pagalgaum Police, having the best of reasons for knowing that there was an unclaimed corpse about, would have the frontier thick with their men to prevent any such re-transfer.

Another idea was to have the corpse identified by sorrowing relatives, produced for the occasion, and then solemnly burned with due formality. But when we

reached the spot we found that the Sub-Inspector had blocked this line inadvertently by recording in his Station Diary that the deceased was a foreigner to that State and bore wounds of a fatal character.

The other frontier close by was that which lay between us and Portuguese India. To this direction we now bent our efforts.

The Portuguese worry very little about corpses; what teases them is salt. In British India, where salt is a Government monopoly, a man is liable to prosecution for scraping salt off the rocks on the sea-shore. The Independent States have mostly imitated this policy but rather feebly, so that they keep their eyes a little shut, though they would certainly arrest at sight any man who tried to sell them personally a quantity of salt. So illicit salt-collectors in the State endeavour to convey their merchandise by boat and night, into Portuguese territory where they command a higher price. The Portuguese excise-officers dislike this practice—they are not convinced Free Traders—and make violent gesticulations, often accompanied by rifle fire, towards suspected smugglers.

However, I conceived the plan of organizing a flotilla of boats purporting to contain salt and with these making a feint to land at night across the river which formed the boundary, while we in a single boat a mile lower down took over the corpse and dumped it at leisure.

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The Inspector agreed that it was a good plan and that in the light of the full moon the Portuguese could not fail to notice the fleet and take it seriously, but he felt it his duty to point out that it would require two or three days to organize the flotilla. By that time our cargo, in a hot climate, would not be in a transportable condition. He then outlined the straightforward solution which I accepted.

Accordingly I fitted a Union Jack in the stern of the boat put on Griffin's uniform and with my cargo in a long box was rowed across to interview the Portuguese Chief of Excise. He was a pleasant little man; he received me in full uniform, a much more splendid affair than Griffin's but not quite so clean, and brought out some attractive drinks. I toasted the Portuguese Republic several times and he made himself quite dizzy over the King-Emperor's health.

Diplomatic relations once established by this means, I told him candidly that I had come on a sad mission. A poor but worthy man, a Portuguese subject, had died, apparently of homesickness, on foreign soil, to wit, that of Arampur State. He was evidently a Christian, for when found he had been holding a bottle in his hands, and only a Christian would drink liquor thus openly. Hindus and Mahomedans had always to be decently furtive about it. The poor man's last words had been about the motherland of Portugal and the Arampur State officials, touched to the core, had resolved to con-

vey his remains to Portuguese India for dignified interment.

The Chief of Excise quite understood. He paid a tribute of another full glass to the memory of the departed patriot and with an expression almost winksful, ordered the box to be reverently lifted ashore by his men. We soon saw them moving off towards the cemetery.

It was then understood between us, somehow or other, that the next British or Arampur State subject accidentally shot while smuggling, or suspected to be smuggling, salt into Greater Portugal should not be made the subject of representations and recriminations. We agreed generally that one good turn deserved another, that we lived in a practical world and that gentlemen must stand together.

I left him a small token (two bottles) of British goodwill, and had great difficulty in preventing him from kissing me farewell.

Thus amity was preserved between two great nations. If Lisbon and Downing Street had been left to deal with the matter, fierce passions would have been aroused and much correspondence exchanged, but no speedy conclusion reached. Always trust the man on the spot, as your newspapers tell you.

PRETEXT FOR RITUAL

If all began with the Raja of a neighbouring State. He was one of those rulers who wanted to make two ears of corn grow where only one blade of grass grew before, to leave the world a nobler and brighter place than he found it, and so on. So he built a new bridge with the State savings for the single year he missed going to Europe. He contrived to get an Eminent Personage to open it, and, as a result, had no less than fifteen guns added to his salute.

Our Raja of course came to hear of this feat, and at once became himself set upon the idea of a bridge for Arampur, with its consequent added honours for Arampur's enlightened ruler.

Well, the Raja is a decent old thing, always ready to help us out of a hole, so that when we saw he was really brooding over the bridge and rather off his feed because of it, we rallied round and considered what we could do.

The matter lay thus and not otherwise, as poets and lawyers say. There was at that time but one bridge in the whole of Arampur State, so that to build another would double the statistics of bridges at one stroke—a great triumph for the administration.

This single extant bridge spanned the river near

Arampur City. It was not really a bridge, but a cause-way, an affair of rough stones, with a crude arch here and there, through which the water percolated. The river bed was dry except during three months of the year, so that the bridge was not overworked. It had been built by a former Raja in rather a hurry in order to show something tangible to set against the fat figures on the debit side of the Public Works Accounts—jewellery had been that year both attractive and expensive. The building was actually a costly affair, because there existed the ancient hereditary right of a certain family to convey passengers across the river in the rainy season. The actual holders of this vested interest were a persevering lot and, after having been defeated in appeals to all State Courts right up to the Durbar, they consistently removed during the night all the stones which the builders had laid during the day. Apparently the builders lost heart after a time and, knowing they were not building for eternity, did not put their best craftsmanship into the construction. I always think Penelope never worried about dropped stitches, when she was engaged upon her interminable but unenduring web.

It was not until the ferry-owners were awarded a State pension in perpetuity, based upon their computed profits, that any progress was visible. However at last the bridge *did* get built and it had endured for fifty years before anybody thought of making another. This brings us down to modern times.

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The Resident and the Dewan assured the Raja that he should have his bridge. His Highness thereupon set out for the Riviera in a good mood, leaving the practical difficulties for others to deal with.

The Director of Public Works was forthwith instructed to proceed with the building of a new bridge. Now, the Director is a likeable fellow, eager and willing to turn his hand and brain to anything, but he is a better book-keeper than engineer. He said he had often seen bridges and marvelled how they stood up. He would on no account guarantee to build one.

We pointed out that he was supposed to be in charge of buildings as well as roads, and thus the burden was on him to deal with any work which might be called for from his Department. In the end we coaxed him into making the attempt. He read some books on the subject. In one of these he found the picture of something which looked easy. At length, pulling himself together, he announced that he would build the bridge and that the aforesaid bridge would be ready for opening on a certain date. It would consist of one arch only.

The Dewan and the Resident were occupied with other matters and rather left him to the job. It was not until some weeks later that they noticed piles of stones deposited on the one good road in the State, that which connects Arampur City with the Railway Station. When the passage was blocked a short by-pass was put

in the road avoiding the new obstacle and rejoining the original road just beyond.

It then appeared that this was the site chosen by the Director of Public Works for his erection. He maintained that the old road at that spot provided the only sound foundation he knew of in the shifting cotton-soil. At this point there was solid rock underneath and, as an amateur, he ought to be given every advantage.

The Resident inquired what the purpose of the bridge might be which assisted the passenger to cross nothing, but merely gave him another bump to surmount. The Dewan, however, supported the Director and pointed out that once the bridge was complete it would be easy to scrape out some earth under the arch to give the impression of a natural difficulty encountered and conquered. The Director then proceeded with the work.

After a bit he became keen and even a little sanguine of achieving his task, though he turned a little pale when we told him it was the ancient custom for the builder of the bridge, when the wooden props were knocked away, to remain standing on the keystone in order to demonstrate his faith in his own skill. The task of standing on the keystone he decided to delegate to his head-foreman, who would probably delegate somebody else.

The bridge rose steadily, and we often rode out to

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have a look at it. At last it was complete, the Raja returned and the date for the opening was fixed to suit the convenience of the Eminent Personage who had consented to perform the ceremony.

Three weeks before the event the wooden supports were removed, the Director superintending the work from a safe distance. The structure now lay naked to the sun; it was not a very beautiful bridge to look at and it performed no obvious function, but it actually stood on its own pins. Barriers were erected at both ends to prevent risks from traffic.

Then one morning it was found that the bridge had collapsed overnight. Whether or no some pariah dog had thoughtlessly disregarded the barrier, it is impossible to say. The Director's own theory was that the weight of the dew had been the last straw. Anyhow, all that remained of months of toil and forethought was a shapeless mass of random stones. And the Eminent Personage was already on his slow way to the State.

Any ordinary first-grade administrator would have acknowledged defeat, wired the whole thing off and left the Raja in the lurch. But the Dewan and the Resident are in a class by themselves for loyalty and invention. They had a little chat together and quietly gave certain orders.

The great day dawned. The Eminent Personage was met at the Station with the usual guard of honour. He was conducted to his motor-car and the procession

started. They traversed the usual road, avoiding the collapsed bridge by the new circuit and drew towards Arampur City. As they approached, the E.P. received cheers and flag-waves from the citizens who thronged the sides of the road. At the causeway the string of cars drew up perforce, for the road was barred by a broad silk ribbon.

Looking across the ribbon, one could see that the fifty-year old bridge had been lavishly coated with whitewash, so that it stood out dazzlingly in the brilliant sunlight. As the Eminent Personage alighted, a deafening cheer resounded to heaven. The Director of Public Works had been on this occasion the director of public applause and had evidently done his best to atone for his failure in construction.

The Eminent Personage solemnly approached the ribbon. The Raja and his Court took their appointed stations, while the Resident looked the picture of official dignity. After one of the most successful short speeches on record—for every pause was filled with cheers from the crowd—the Eminent Personage received from the Dewan a gilt pair of scissors. With these he cut the ribbon and, with grave solemnity, declared the bridge open. He resumed his seat in the car and was the first to drive across, followed by the Raja and the rest of us.

The Raja got his extra guns all right and a little decoration thrown in. As for the intended new bridge,

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it is not to prove wasted effort after all, for the State is now starting an Archaeological Department with this interesting pile of stones as Exhibit No. 1 on the catalogue. The post of Director of Archæology is expected to be awarded, with the Durbar's consent, to a promising young nephew of the Dewan's.

A CHARITABLE ENDOWMENT

EVERYBODY was agreed that the Arampur Club building was far from perfect. White ants had raised hummocks in the floor, lifting the matting before them and making pedestrianism difficult. The roof was good enough protection against the sun, but in the monsoon one had to choose with care the site for one's long chair, to prevent one's peg being diluted a great deal below the required proof.

Again one did not dare to look upwards, for the roof, even early in the evening, was seen to be alive with snakes, scorpions and centipedes. Lizards clambered about the walls, clucking cheerfully to each other and occasionally falling with a plop upon the head of some drowsy Member. Giant congeries of hunting-spiders, each comprising an ovoid body and innumerable legs, swung feverishly to and fro during the evening, preparatory to separating for their nocturnal sport. Flying beetles of colossal size would deal the unoffending human a knock-out blow on the point or damage his nose, while the frogs, though never elected as Members, surged in from all quarters and used the Club as their own. The land-crabs often did some gate-crashing on their own. It was actually a lizard getting down the

Resident's neck that won him over to the conviction that a new club-house must be built.

Most of our troubles were due to the fact that the building, apart from the roof, was entirely of mud. What was needed was a sound stone building with a high plinth, the whole costing about a lakh and a half. We raised what money we could by floating the Arampur Club Ltd. and each buying a few shares. But the total of rupees thus scraped together were but drops in the Indian Ocean; we were compelled to seek other sources of revenue.

We broached the subject to all our visitors from Simla, but they, coming to Arampur always in the dry season, considered our hut to be good enough and we could not press this or any other question very far without making ourselves unpopular.

The Dewan as usual was ready to help us with a small grant from the Anthropological and Welfare Departments, which exist only in the annual State Accounts. The Raja could be counted on for a generous donation from his private purse, but still the bulk of the money was lacking.

Now there is always a lot of English and American money available in India for charities of a certain kind and many agencies exist for its distribution. Unfortunately we had no missionaries in Arampur to start the ball rolling. However, the Director of Education, a serious-minded Oxonian, wrote letters full of Latin

and Greek tags, to all parts, pointing out that in Arampur while there were institutions for both Hindu and Mohammedan orphans, no facilities existed for the entertainment and upbringing of Christian orphans. He appealed for funds for the endowment of such an institution and appended statements signed by the Resident and the Dewan indicating the crying need for such provision as he craved. The Dewan being, of course, a Hindu, his testimony added a touch of disinterestedness to the affair. There are no religious or communal conflicts in Arampur. We are a regular band of brothers.

Funds began to roll in, and the Director of Public Works drew up the plans, copies of which were forwarded to the contributing societies, with class-rooms, dormitories, play-room, assembly-hall and so on all clearly marked. We had to take care that the play-room was large enough to hold a billiard table and the assembly-hall lofty enough for badminton. Otherwise it was plain sailing.

The building was erected with all possible speed, since we wanted to be snug before the monsoon burst. The Raja opened the Christian Orphanage in person and we entertained hordes of benefactors from distant parts by showing them round the building. A few balls and toys lay about the place, a dozen borrowed beds were exhibited completely made. These, with the Civil Surgeon's wife strolling about in hospital uniform, gave

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those artistic touches which convinced without explanation. Nobody ever thought of asking to see an orphan.

There are no genuine Christian orphans in the State as yet. If one arrives, we will gladly pay his board and lodging somewhere else. Meanwhile the Orphanage flourishes under the able control of the Civil Surgeon as Superintendent and myself as Secretary. Needless to say, we accept no remuneration for our services. We are subject to the control of a strong visiting committee, consisting of the Resident, the Director of Education and the Conservator of Forests.

It only remains to ask my readers that, should they visit any of the neighbouring States and hear the Members of the Arampur Club described, in derision, as 'The Orphans', they should remind themselves that such backbiting is only the expression of envy, hatred and jealousy.

WOODS AND FORESTS

If any visitor to Arampur wants to see a State Department functioning perfectly, we usually show him the Forests. The Forest Department, ably headed by the Chief Conservator, a maternal cousin of the Dewan's, is a model of organization. It is housed in a commodious building and the office staff alone numbers thirty-three souls. Besides these there are crowds of Forest Guards and a few Assistant Conservators, living somewhere outside the City. But real activity centres in the Forest Office. The office is essentially the Department.

As I have hinted, the Department is a model of smooth running. Books are accurately kept, correspondence promptly dealt with, records maintained with care and the Chief Conservator's punkah is the envy of his colleagues. There is a library of forest lore, including works by Edgar Wallace, and some truly gorgeous maps on the walls.

These maps indicate, in lively colours, which portions of the State of Arampur are dedicated to the growing of trees and are in fact Forest Land, under the control of the Department. They show exactly where the domain of each Assistant Conservator and Forest Guard begins and ends, with what species of tree each section is

planted and other details of interest to persons who have a natural love of order and method.

The maps are flanked by shelves supporting theodolites and other surveying instruments. The very air of the place breathes efficiency, enthusiasm and adequate supervision. One glance by an inspecting officer is usually sufficient to show him that here at least he can express his satisfaction without the preliminary grind of checking innumerable tedious entries in books. The Department is, without doubt, splendidly equipped. It has everything one could ask for, with one exception. That exception is trees.

Soon after the Department came into being, the first Chief Conservator, after experiment, discovered that all his troubles were due to trees. Without trees, he foresaw, an ideal Department could be created and maintained. He was justified by results, for who can deny that a perfect theory is more satisfying than an irregular practice?

This pioneer discovered that if you planted trees, they were usually eaten or trampled down by cattle, or else removed for firewood by individualistic peasants. Even when left alone they developed disease and never grew to the shape you wanted without a lot of pruning, lopping and tending. It was far better to do without trees altogether. On the map in the office a section of forest land could be planted up overnight with any kind of tree you chose and there was an end of the matter.

Maintained on these lines, the Department prospered and became the pattern it now is. When an Inspecting Officer drew near, the office was polished and dusted and all records laid open for inspection. If the Inspecting Officer wanted direct contact with forest land, he was led somewhere into the jungle and shown a plot which it was proposed to plant up the following year.

This always sufficed, because Inspecting Officers never liked to spend nights and evenings away from the solid comforts of the station. They had no direct experience of forests—for somehow officials raised in the Forest Department of British India never seemed to climb as high as Simla—and having spent most of their lives in offices saw no reason to begin roughing it late in life.

Unfortunately it did once happen that a real Forest man was called in by a thoughtless neighbouring State for consultation and was ordered, while in the region, to report on Arampur State Forest Department as well.

We do not easily yield to panic in Arampur, but this news rather threw us off our balance for a while. The new-comer was certain to turn aside from the elegant office to moon about among the wild scenes in which he had passed his earlier life. He would be a sombre taciturn man, rather contemptuous of the life of the station and yearning for the great open spaces. He was possibly even fond of trees for their own sake.

There was just a chance that he was more keen on

birds or insects than on trees, for many Forest men go that way. Being alone so much, they are apt to get loopy about something—nature or art, or science, or literature, or anything that doesn't matter. So we kept our eyes open for any novelties which might appear in the non-human world. But we had little hope because we all knew that birds were of two kinds, those you shoot and those you don't; while the less one saw or felt of insects the better.

We were genuinely worried. The Resident and the Dewan put their heads together daily and at last some plan began to emerge from their councils. There still remained a fortnight before the visit. Giants of the forest could not be raised in a fortnight, but it was fortunately the planting season and with the whole State behind us it might be possible to cover a wide area with young trees in time.

Several thousand saplings were ordered from all parts, and activity centred in every patch of scrub to be found near the City. It was impossible to transport the things to the remoter parts of the State, because they were apt to become fewer, the farther they travelled. The simple peasants seemed to have the idea that the Raja was distributing free firewood but, through some inadvertence had issued it green instead of dry.

We therefore centralized on a large patch of waste land about two miles out, and soon had the satisfaction of seeing this desert blossom like the radish. Having

been planted hurriedly, it was unlikely that the trees would live. The visitor must therefore be shown them while they were still standing.

The hard-bitten forester arrived and we saw at once that we had predicted his character with some accuracy. He spoke but little and seemed to wear a faraway look when we discussed horses, dogs and billiards. He looked wearily at the grand Forest Office and asked to be taken to the jungle.

By arrangement, the Chief Conservator fell sick. He was the only man who could be expected to answer questions of detail, so it was wise to keep him out of the way. The Resident, feeling that the credit of the whole State was implicated, himself drove out the visitor in his own car.

They first visited the new plantation, driving by a highly circuitous route in order to give the impression of intense remoteness. The Resident is excellent at little touches of this kind and his manner is uniformly charming and open. The drive took a long time and though the visitor did not appear impressed by the exhibition we had gained a day and so far escaped condemnation.

That day enabled the Chief Conservator—who was officially groaning on the bed of pain—to pay a mufti visit to the neighbouring State of Pagalgaum. A short chat with the Pagalgaum Chief Conservator and the substitution for the monogram P.F. (indicating Pagal-

gaum Forests) in the caps of the local Guard of the monogram A.F. tended to confuse any distinction about frontiers. Our Chief Conservator brought back the A.F. monograms with him at nightfall, to be worn again on the morrow by their genuine holders.

Thus, on the second day, the Resident had no difficulty in showing our visitor some really fine mature trees. There was a danger that he had already inspected these trees while at Palagaum and might recognize the section although approached from a different direction. But our Resident is never afraid to take chances, and the fellow fortunately had his attention diverted from the landscape to a stone he tripped over. In a moment he was crouching over the stone, peering at it through a magnifying-glass and getting very excited.

He remained on the ground some time, the Resident told us, then rose and said sadly: "Nothing startling after all. I had hoped it was Bactrian or perhaps pre-Elamite."

This gave the Resident a cue. He must at all costs keep the visitor away from our collapsed bridge, and he must hunt up some fresh stones to amuse him. Unfortunately time pressed and we must now carry out the third day's programme as arranged. By the fourth day some quasi-archaic stones might be found or contrived. This work was delegated to the Director of Archæology.

The third day's programme was long and varied. You all know that the great enemy of the forester is fire. When fire occurs or is reported, every member of the Forest Department forsakes the work upon which he is engaged and dashes off to quell the fire.

With an ordinary Simla official, a mere alarm of fire in an obscure corner of the State would have sufficed. The Forest staff would merely have absented themselves from the office and the inspection would have closed automatically. If the Inspecting Officer lingered, the fire would simply rage a few days longer.

But that kind of fire was useless for our hardened veteran because, as a forester himself, habit and tradition would lead him, first of the crowd, to leap towards the fire in an attempt to stem it. So the conflagration must be real.

For the scene of the fire we chose the new plantation, for the humane reason that it could not spread thence beyond the rough country covered by saplings and for the practical reason that, having now been inspected, the plantation was of no further use.

The alarm was stage-managed with care. Scarcely had the Resident and the Visitor taken their seats for a drive to some imaginary section of Forest Land, than a dusty villager dashed forward and hung on the bonnet. In a well-rehearsed speech he described the magnitude and fury of the fire. Without a word the Resident let in the clutch and dashed off on the forty-odd miles

WOODS AND FORESTS

route traversed two days earlier. When they were safely off, we sauntered out the couple of miles by the direct route and arranged inflammable material in suitable places. Later on, at an accurately calculated moment, we started the blaze.

By the time the Resident's car arrived, we had laid waste and blackened several acres and had a nice regular line of flame creeping across the country. Then, as arranged, before the Visitor's eyes we succeeded in putting it out with very little delay. The arrival of the sick Chief Conservator, borne in a litter from his bed, preached a solid sermon about devotion to duty. A nice touch.

Thus ended the third day, with general congratulations and a long drive home for the Resident and the Visitor.

The fourth morning a telegram arrived for the latter: mysterious stone discovered near nivinagar city stop please make first unofficial inspection signed director archaeology nivinagar.

Our own Director of Archaeology had not been idle in the State of Nivinagar. And thus ended one of the most anxious inspections Arampur has ever endured.

PRACTICAL INSURANCE

It is always interesting to watch the impact of Western ideas upon the East. The Oriental's practical common sense invariably turns them to his own profit.

Fire Insurance is not a product indigenous to India. It was, to begin with, mostly in the hands of European firms, but it was so manifestly profitable that commercially minded Indians could not long neglect it and the competition for business became fast and furious.

At the time I am writing of, the most recent god of the West was Turnover. Formerly the commercial West worshipped other deities such as Solvency, Efficiency and Net Profit. But for the time the cult of Turnover was winning hands down.

The idea is that if each year more business is done than in the previous year, the dividends and claims can always be paid from the new cash which pours in. And, of course, so long as business increases, insurance firms are bound to prosper. This method has often been exploited by purveyors of rubber tyres and owners of department stores and is known to be highly successful, so long as the turnover expands. If it ceases to expand, there is a crash, but long before that happens the original holders of shares have left the concern and started in some other line. This trick is played time after time

upon the crafty West so that it is hardly to be expected that the simple East can see through it at once.

The game was played at its simplest in the Insurance world. In Arampur anything could be insured against fire at a nominal premium. The great thing was to secure a premium, however small, and so increase the total turnover of the company. Commissions paid to agents sometimes amounted to four-fifths of the premiums.

Soon the shrewd Indians saw that it was of little use to insure their houses for, being of mud, they were very difficult to fire. If they succeeded in destroying the roof, which was an easier matter, they were merely supplied with a new roof instead of a handsome sum of money. So they looked round for more suitable material to insure against fire.

One year cotton prices were low and the merchants found that by the time they had paid the freight to Bombay, allowed for losses *en route* and bought a truck from the station-master, there would be no profit on the enterprise. Besides, owing to the consuming greed of station-masters up the line, the Arampur station-master was short of trucks, so that cotton began to pile up in the station-yard. It was then that the insurance of cotton against fire really took hold. The agents of the Vulcan, the Ark and the Dil Khush Fire Insurance Companies led busy lives issuing policies. Their Head Offices egged them on to increase always the turnover.

It did not escape the hard-headed merchants that the

logical sequence of events demanded a fire. The theory of 'protection' advanced in the companies' advertising matter did not appeal to them in the manner intended. They simply waited until it became certain that their cotton could not be marketed at a profit, and then they allowed their cotton to go up in flames. Every night there was a fresh pyrotechnic display in the Station Yard.

The first claim, a small one, was on the Vulcan. The Vulcan agent made the most of the occasion and ostentatiously paid the claim in public, rupee by rupee, drawing in as a result of his skill many fresh clients. The representatives of the Ark and the Dil Khush gnashed their teeth in impotent envy. But their turn came the following night when they also paid spectacularly and promptly on two more accidents, one of which was a bonfire of rubbish.

To begin with, it was easy to ascribe the fires to natural causes, to refer guardedly to the heat of the season and the possibilities of spontaneous combustion. But soon the cotton-rate in Bombay had fallen further and fires became of nightly occurrence. Spontaneous combustion, it should be noted as a scientific fact, never takes place during daytime.

The climax was reached when the complete crop of Vrijbukhandas, the Arampur Cotton King, went up in a magnificent blaze which was visible for miles around. This was covered by the Dil Khush and everything promised well for their agent until the local Inspector of

Police arrested a ne'er-do-well named Govind and requested the Company to defer payment of the claim.

I do not know what induced the Inspector to take this extraordinary action. As a rule, he is a man to let well alone, and I can see no reason for his interference except that he was supposed to have a private grudge against Vrijbukhandas over some affair of a woman. Govind was one of his own informers, so that of course the arrest was quite in the best tradition. But he must have known that he was harming a wide section of the public and injuring the legitimate business of insurance.

Meanwhile the Vulcan and Ark made the most of their position by pointing to their own satisfied claims and deriding the Dil Khus organization. The Dil Khush agent, that unfortunate man, dared not appear in public for fear of being mobbed by clients demanding the return of their premiums. He stayed at home, sending from time to time imploring wires to his Head Office. The Head Office thereupon sent down an Important Person with full powers to deal with the matter.

From the beginning the Important Person had his way. He soothed the feverish clients of the Dil Khush. He visited the scene of the fire, and from a mere inspection of the ashes decided that the claim was genuine. He listened patiently to the Inspector's evidence and the confession of Govind, which was both detailed and convincing, but, having heard also the local agent's story of the company's plight, he decided that the Police case

was a fabrication and paid Vrijbukhandas his claim in full. The resulting increase in turnover was so great that the Dil Khush rapidly outdistanced its rivals.

But the Vulcan and the Ark were not defeated yet. They found some policies belonging to one of Vrijbukhandas' relations. These policies everybody had supposed to cover quite other properties, but the Companies discovered that the goods really insured were actually Vrijbukhandas' cotton. So there were two more public ceremonies and two more cheques for Vrijbukhandas.

When the Important Person had drifted away and things had calmed down, the Dewan stood Vrijbukhandas a good dinner and, after pointing out to what exact amount of Income Tax the merchant would be liable as the result of this windfall, suggested which of the State Funds stood in need of donations and which State Officials would feel honoured by a personal present on the next Public Holiday.

Vrijbukhandas, a man of the world, immediately agreed and in addition spontaneously offered to take Govind into his service as night-watchman. This generous olive-branch soothed the Police Inspector and Arampur as a whole did well out of the affair.

The policy-holders all over India who are ultimately responsible for this benefaction should be content with the knowledge that they have made a worthy sacrifice to the great god Turnover.

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